DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 322 087 SP 032 245

AUTHOR Grippin, Pauline C.
TITLE Reflections on Reflection: The Student Teaching Seminar.
PUB DATE 15 Feb 90
NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Eastern Educational Research Association (Clearwater, FL, February 15, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cognitive Style; *Conceptual Tempo; *Critical Thinking; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Program Effectiveness; Secondary Education; *Seminars; *Student Teacher Attitudes; *Student Teaching
IDENTIFIERS *Reflective Teaching

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a preliminary look at the student teaching seminar as a vehicle for encouraging reflective thinking about teaching and learning. The seminar group was composed of 32 undergraduate and graduate students, student teachers in the secondary school disciplines. A preliminary self-analysis essay written by the student teachers addressed the issues of career choice, purposes of education, student-teacher relationship, and perceived strengths and weaknesses. The students attended a weekly cross-discipline seminar in which the reflective teacher model was explained and endorsed. Students were required to reflect upon readings, structured observations of practicing teachers, and their own planning for teaching. Discussions of teaching strategies, goals and objectives, and contextual issues were held concurrently with field experiences. In the final class period, students responded anonymously to a survey on their perceptions of change in their ideas and goals as a function of the student teaching experience and the seminar experience. An analysis of the results of the study indicated that the student teaching seminar has potential as a vehicle for educational change via the encouragement of reflective practice. Results are displayed in seven tables; the two essay-type questionnaires are included. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED322087

REFLECTIONS ON REFLECTION: THE STUDENT TEACHING SEMINAR

Pauline C. Grippin
The College of Saint Rose, Albany, NY

Paper presented at the annual conference of the Eastern Educational Research Association at Clearwater, Florida
February 15, 1990

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P.C. Grippen

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

SP 032 245

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Reflections on Reflection: The Student Teaching Seminar

Pauline C. Grippin

The College of Saint Rose, Albany, NY

"How can we help our students to prepare themselves to think and act in ways that will eventually become good teaching?" (Clark, 1988, p. 11). Much has been written in recent years about the potential benefits of developing reflective teachers. Definitions of reflectivity include such dimensions as critical planning before instruction (Clark, 1988), decision-making during instruction (Kennedy, 1989), examining the technical, practical and critical features of one's practice (Zeichner, 1989), and understanding the reasons for children's learning outcomes (Court, 1988). For the purposes of this paper, reflection is defined as self-analysis by teachers of their goals, strategies, and understandings as they impact upon the learning and development of their students.

It is well-recognized and documented that prior experience as a student creates the perception that the role of teacher is "teller" and the role of learner is "receptor." (Anderson, 1989, Barnes, 1989, Florio-Ruane, 1989, McDiarmid, Ball, & Anderson, 1989, Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984). The typical pre-service teacher believes that the main responsibility of the teacher is to tell information in a motivating way and then to test a reiteration of the telling to evaluate the success

of the learning (McDiarmid, Ball & Anderson, 1989). Florio-Ruane (1989) notes that the many years as a student also blind the pre-service teacher to the social and organizational context of schooling; the familiar and comfortable surroundings become "invisible" because of their very familiarity. Contextual variables are then taken as givens, rather than questioned or reflected upon.

Unfortunately, extant research suggests that typical pre-service field experiences do little to change these misperceptions. Student teaching experiences are reported to reinforce the belief that the prime consideration of the teacher should be covering the material and managing the class efficiently (Goodman, 1985). This "learning" reinforces the naive conceptions of teaching that pre-service teachers bring to their educational training. Tabachnick & Zeichner (1984) report that student teachers in their study solidified their prior conceptions of the teaching role during their student teaching experience, rather than changing it (and only one student had a prior conception of teacher as reflective).

The evidence strongly suggests that most pre-service teachers have misinformation about teaching and that typical field experiences, including student teaching, do little to address and correct that misinformation. Field experiences that reinforce an uncritical view of the status quo make it difficult to change educational practice in the schools. Ironically, a

successful student teaching experience in a traditional setting where teacher reflection is not modeled leads to acceptance of the status quo and resistance to educational change (Beyer, 1984).

Evertson, Hawley, & Zlotnik (1984), in their review of effective teacher preparation programs, point to the lack of integration between academic coursework and field components as a significant factor to be addressed. The challenge appears to be to find a vehicle by which to monitor and challenge the field experience in such a way that the social forces at work in the field do not overpower the academic coursework. Some glimmers of possibility are found in the literature. Grossman and Riehirt (1988) report that their student teachers acknowledged benefits of their prior coursework for setting a "sense of pedagogical ideals." Clark (1988) reports that teachers engaged in research projects with university faculty were lead to reflective thinking about their practice. Sykes (1989) discusses the positive and negative aspects of a case study approach to teaching reflection. Zeichner and Teitelbaum (1982) describe their use of the student teaching seminar to encourage critical reflection on the ethical and moral dimensions of teacher decision-making. Each of these papers encourages the view that prior conceptualizations of teaching and learning can be impacted and changed.

This paper also reports a preliminary look at the student teaching seminar as a vehicle for encouraging reflective thinking

about teaching and learning. While seminars are standard fare in teacher education programs, not much seems to be known about them. Zimpher and Ashburn (1985) remind us that not much is known about teacher education, period! We have a great number of descriptive pieces on teacher education programs, but very little is available on what processes lead to what products. The variables to be controlled in any systematic study overwhelm the resources of most interested researchers.

This study accepts the theoretical premises of the reflective teacher model and uses a student self-report methodology to explore the potential of the student teaching seminar to encourage reflective thinking.

METHOD

Students enrolled in student teaching for the fall, 1989 semester constitute the population. There were 21 undergraduate and 11 graduate students, student teaching in the secondary school in the disciplines of English, social studies, science, math and Spanish. Each student wrote a self- analysis essay as part of the admissions procedure to student teaching . This essay addressed the issues of career choice, purposes of education, student-teacher relationship, and perceived strengths and weaknesses. The students attended a weekly, cross-discipline

seminar in which the reflective teacher model was explained and endorsed. Students were required to reflect upon readings, structured observations of practicing teachers, and their own planning for teaching. Discussions of teaching strategies, goals and objectives, and contextual issues were held concurrently with field experiences. Students were required to complete a rating scale self-analysis of competence and confidence at 6 points during the semester. In the final class period, students responded anonymously to a survey which probed their perceptions of change in their ideas and goals as a function of (1) the student teaching experience itself, and (2) the seminar experience. The seminar instructor was not the field supervisor. The dynamic was a seminar which attempted to require student teachers to reflectively connect their academic coursework with their field experience.

The admissions essays and final survey were analyzed by topic without prior conceptions of response categories. As categories emerged, they were tabulated and transposed to percentages to allow comparison over different numbers of responses (in all categories, some students had more responses than others). The self-analysis checklists were summarized across the 6 instances by individual student.

RESULTS

The self-analysis checklists did not provide useful data and are not reported in this study. (Students tended to evaluate themselves consistently in spite of whatever problems they were expressing in class.)

Tables 1 through 7 display the results of the tabulation of response categories for the admissions essay and the post-seminar survey. In the tables, "before" refers to before student teaching and seminar (the admissions essay) and "after" refers to after student teaching and seminar (the post-seminar survey).

Teaching as a Career

Table 1 reflects the categories of response to teaching as a career. The admissions essay directions ask students to tell why they have chosen teaching as a career. The post-survey asked: What about teaching as a career appeals to you? The influence of previous role models, both teachers and parents, dissatisfaction with prior careers, and job security were 33% of the Before responses. Before student teaching and seminar, the desire to work with adolescents and/or people, love for their subject matter, and the desire to have an impact on future generations were equally represented at 20%. Being attracted to teaching because it was seen as challenging or exciting was expressed in 7% of the responses. In the "after" column of Table 1, the percentages change to a preponderance of responses

related to the desire to work with adolescents and/or people (62%). Love of subject matter remains nearly identical at 24%, and having an impact on future generations drops from 20% to 11%.

Because the post-seminar survey did not include the categories of role models, prior career dissatisfaction and job security, Table 2 compares the before and after tablulation with these categories removed. Using this comparison, reinforces the shift from more general concerns to a stronger expression of desire to work with adolescents/people.

The post-seminar survey asked the students: What, if any, topics discussed in seminar influenced your perceptions of teaching as a career. The tabulation of percentages is in Table 3. Fifty-three percent of the responses indicated that specific lecture topics had impacted their perceptions. Among those mentioned were teacher burn-out, mainstreaming, and classroom discipline. The more general categories of discussions of goals and professionalism and all of the seminar were included at 13% each. A guest speaker from the Career Placement Center was mentioned by only 1 student. Six students had no response, a percentage of responses of 19%.

Purposes/Goals of Education

In the admissions essay, students are asked to tell what they believe the purpose of education to be. In the post-seminar

survey the question was: What are the goals of education as you perceive them? Changes in the before and after data are in Table 4. The most popular response at both times reflected a humanistic approach to education: teaching the whole child, promoting healthy growth of the whole child (before = 21%; after = 24%). Meeting the needs of society declined from 21% to 13% Teaching the basics, survival skills remained about constant: 17% before, 18% after. Preparing students for their personal futures in society, assuring a future high quality of life changed from 17% before to 13% after. Promoting intellectual growth and critical thinking remained about constant: 13% before, 11% after; as did creating motivation to learn: 10% before, 9% after. A new category emerged in the after data: transmitting subject matter knowledge (11%)

The influence of the seminar on the perception of the goals/purposes of education was not evidenced in 45% of the responses. Among those responses which indicated an influence, specific lectures such as state policies and cooperative learning were mentioned 29%, discussions of goals 10%, the general view of teaching as espoused in seminar 10% and all of seminar 6%.

Desirable Characteristics of the Student-teacher Relationship and Student Teacher Strengths and Weaknesses

The admissions essay asked students to discuss their

perception of what should constitute the student-teacher relationship. Performance characteristics of teachers constituted the largest percentage of responses: 29% (See Table 6.) Fifteen different performance characteristics were mentioned, including good facilitator, encourager of thinking skills, uses humanistic teaching strategies, sets priorities, listens, and is interactive. Personal characteristics of teachers (27%) included 14 different items, including openness, honesty, fairness, warmth, optimism, and patience. Mutual respect between teacher and student was 22%. Teacher seen as respected authority figure was 14%, while teacher as role model and teacher as subject matter specialist were 5% and 4%, respectively.

In addition, the admissions essay asked students to discuss any strengths or weaknesses they might have in relation to teaching as a career. The post-seminar survey asked students to tell what strengths were improved by their student teaching experience and by their seminar experiences, and, also, what weakness were revealed and improved by their student teaching experience and by their seminar experiences. The data are assembled in Table 7. First, note that the number of responses varies greatly in this table. As might be expected, a great number of strengths were noted in the admissions essay, along with very few weaknesses. Also, the number of responses in relation to improving strengths is much greater for student

teaching experience than for seminar experiences.

The predominance of performance and personal characteristics seen in Table 6 is repeated here. Perceived strengths before student teaching and seminar are 68% personal characteristics and mirror the personal characteristics perceived to be important in the student-teacher relationship. These personal characteristics were improved by student teaching (31%) and by the seminar (10%). While performance characteristics were not seen as a strength in the before condition (8%), 56% of the responses indicated that performance strengths had been improved by student teaching and 58% of the seminar related responses indicated improvement of performance strengths. Being a subject matter specialist was seen as a strength in 17% of the before responses and 10% of the after student teaching responses. Although background experiences (e.g. travel, prior teaching experiences) were seen as strengths in 8% of the before responses, professional awareness was seen as strengthened by seminar 13%. No impact of seminar on strengths was reflected in 16% of the responses.

Lack of background experience was perceived as a weakness in 27%, but 50% of the responses indicated that personal characteristics might constitute a problem. These included shyness, lack of confidence, procrastination. Performance weaknesses revealed and improved as a result of student teaching (80%) and as a result of seminar (55%) indicate perception of

strong influence, although 32% of the responses indicated no impact of seminar on improving weaknesses.

DISCUSSION

It is important to stress at this juncture that this study was not intended to produce generalizable results. This is clearly a population, not a sample of a population. The purpose of the study was to provide a preliminary step in the study of the potential for the student teaching seminar to be the vehicle for connecting field experiences and academic training in reflective teaching. The questions are: (1) Can this time and cost efficient methodology provide sufficiently reliable and valid data to explore the impact of the student teaching seminar on reflective teaching behaviors? and (2) If so, does the student teaching seminar have the potential to be a significant factor in producing teachers able to implement academic training in the face of the social pressures of field experience?

The rating approach to self-analysis during the student teaching and seminar experiences did not produce valid data. Students did not rate their perceptions of level of competence and confidence in accord with the verbal statements they were making in seminar and to their field supervisors. Obviously, the instrument may be faulty (see Appendix A); however, two other explanations seem plausible. The rating scale

was easy to fill out and was often done hurriedly in seminar class in order to get it handed in. In addition, the form indicated and the instructor emphasized that, although completion was required, responses were in no way related to seminar grading. In the typical student mindset, if it doesn't count, it cannot be very important.

Since ongoing monitoring seems an important thing to do if real cause-effect connections are to be observed, a more structured methodology is called for. One possibility would be structured interviews and field observations, a very time-consuming approach. A more time-efficient method would be a series of survey instruments that asked more specific questions about influence and application of seminar and prior course content in the field experience.

The admissions essay and the post-seminar survey results appear reliable in the sense that almost identical categories emerged in both. This sense of consistency is strengthed by the fact that the admissions essays were signed, while the post-seminar surveys were anonymous. Validity of self-report is always suspect, but the anonymity of the post-seminar survey offers support for validity. Students were urged to be as honest as they could in their responses and were reminded that the reseacher/instructor had no prior experience with their handwriting. Some students in each section of the survey indicated that the seminar had no impact.

The second question (Does the student-teaching seminar have the potential to be a significant factor in producing teachers able to implement academic training in the face of the social pressures of field experience?) is answered in the affirmative. The results of the post-seminar survey are encouraging. Student perceptions changed from "before" to "after." And, the seminar was perceived by the students to have an impact separate from the impact of student teaching.

Many of the before/after comparisons which indicate change are neither surprising nor necessarily desirable. The student teaching experience has often been shown to create a change from the general and theoretical to the personal and practical. These perceptions include a stronger indication of desire to work with adolescents (Table 1), less emphasis on education as the vehicle of society and more on transmission of subject matter (Table 4), and the impact of field experience on both performance and personal characteristics (Table 7).

The perception of the impact of the student teaching seminar as separate from the impact of the student teaching experience is most noted in the areas of professionalism (Table 3), educational goals (Table 5) and improvement of strengths and weaknesses (Table 7). While a small percentage of responses indicated that the whole seminar experience had an important impact, most perceptions of impact were related to very specific topics and experiences. This is positive in that it indicates a

student-realized connection between specific course content and their personal outcomes. On the negative side, a rather large percent of the responses indicated no impact of the seminar (career, 19%; goals, 45%; improved strengths, 16%; improved weaknesses, 32%).

It may be important to note again that this seminar was cross-discipline. Although students completed assignments in relation to the discipline they were teaching, the class discussions were not "methods course" discussions. The level of discourse was secondary education, not math, English, etc.. While this seems to fly in the face of current research trends which espouse the benefits of discipline specific teaching strategies, it in fact made it possible to ask students to concentrate on the impact of strategies on the larger picture. The potential benefit of this kind of seminar may be that it helps the student teacher to counter the total emersion into subject matter teaching that leads to the over concentration on "covering the material" and "keeping the class orderly." Perhaps having to think about how different classroom management techniques impact learning environments, how teacher burn-out affects education, how reflective teacher behaviors impact performance, how some testing techniques create unfair practices, etc., while they are student teaching, creates a freedom to think about and question other aspects of the experience.

In summary, the conclusion of this study is (1)that

inexpensive and time-efficient methodologies are useful in the exploration of the student-teaching seminar , and (2) the student teaching seminar has potential as a vehicle for educational change via the encouragement of reflective practice.

References

Anderson, L. M. (1989) Learners and learning in Reynolds, M. C. (Ed.) Knowledge base for the beginning teacher New York: Pergamon Press, pp.85-99.

Barnes, H. (1989) Structuring knowledge for beginning teachers in Reynolds, M. C. (Ed.) Knowledge base for the beginning teacher New York: Pergamon Press, pp.13-22.

Beyer, L. E. (1984) Field experience, ideology, and the development of critical reflectivity. Journal of Teacher Education, 35(3), 36-41.

Clark, C. M. (1988, March) Asking the right questions about teacher preparation: contributions of research on teacher thinking. Educational Researcher, 17(2), 5-12.

Court, D. (1988) 'Reflection-in-action': some definitional problems in Grimmet, P.P. & Erickson, D.L. (Eds.), Reflection in Teacher Education. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 143-146.

Evertson, C., Hawley, W., & Zlotnik, M., (1984, August) The characteristics of effective teacher preparation programs: a review of research. Peabody College: Vanderbilt University.

Florio-Ruane, S. (1989) Social organization of classes and schools

in Reynolds, M. C. (Ed.) Knowledge base for the beginning teacher New York: Pergamon Press, pp.163-172.

Goodman, J. (1985) What students learn from early field experience: a case study and critical analysis, Journal of Teacher Education, 36(6), 42-48.

Grossman, P.C. & Riehirt, A.E. (1988) Unacknowledged knowledge growth: a re-examination of the effects of teacher education, Teaching & Teacher Education, 4(1), 53-62.

Kennedy, M. M. (1989, Spring) Reflection and the problem of professional standards. Colloquy, 2(2), 1-6.

Kennedy, M. M. (1989, Spring) Kenneth Zeichner reflecting on reflection. Colloquy, 2(2), 15-21.

McDiarmid, G.W., Ball, D. L., & Anderson, C. W., (1989) Why staying one chapter ahead doesn't really work: subject-specific pedagogy.
in Reynolds, M. C. (Ed.) Knowledge base for the beginning teacher New York: Pergamon Press, pp. 193-205.

Reynolds, M. C. (Ed.) Knowledge base for the beginning teacher New York: Pergamon Press.

Sykes, G. (1989, Spring) Learning to teach with cases, Colloquy, 2(2), 7 - 13.

Tabachnick, B. R. & Zeichner, K. M., (1984) The impact of the student teaching experience on the development of teacher perspective. Journal of Teacher Education, 35(6), 28-36.

Zeichner, K. M. & Teitelbaum, K. (1982) Personalized and inquiry-oriented teacher education: an analysis of two approaches to the development of curriculum for field-based experiences. Journal of Education for Teaching, 8(2), 95-117.

Table 1

Teaching as a Career

Percentage of Responses	Before[1] %	After[2] %
Desire to work with adolescents/people	20	62
Love for subject matter	20	24
Have impact on future generations	20	11
Challenging, exciting	7	4
Influence of role models	22	--
Prior career dissatisfaction	8	--
Job security	3	--
Total number of responses	60	47

1 Why did you chose teaching as a career?

2 What about teaching as a career appeals to you?

Table 2

Reconfiguration of Table 1 with Role Models, Prior Career and Job Security Deleted

Percentage of Responses	Before[1] %	After[2] %
Desire to work with adolescents/people	30	62
Love for subject matter	30	24
Have impact on future generations	30	11
Challenging, exciting	10	4
Total number of responses	40	47

1 Why did you chose teaching as a career?

2 What about teaching as a career appeals to you?

Table 3

Seminar Infuence on Perception of Teaching as a Career1

Percentage of Responses	%
Specific lectures e.g. burn-out, mainstreaming, discipline	53
No response	19
Discussions of goals, professionalism	13
All of seminar	13
Career Placement Guest Speaker	3
Total number of responses	32

1 What, if any, topics discussed in seminar influenced your perceptions of teaching as a career?

Table 4

Purpose/Goals of Education

Percentage of Responses	Before1 %	After2 %
Teach the whole child, humanistic ideals	21	24
Meet the needs of society	21	13
Teaching basics, mastery, survival	17	18
Prepare for future in society, high quality of life	17	13
Promote intellectual growth, critical thinking	13	11
Create motivation to learn	10	9

		Reflections on
Transmit subject matter knowledge	--	11
Total number of responses	52	45

1 What is the purpose of education?

2 What are the goals of education as you perceive them?

Table 5

Seminar Infuence on Perception of Goals of Education1

Percentage of Responses	%
No response	45
Specific lectures, e.g. state policies, cooperative learning	29
Discussion of goals	10
General view of teaching espoused in seminar	10
All of seminar	6
Total number of responses	31

1 What, if any, topics discussed in seminar influenced your perception of the goals of education?

Table 6

Desirable Characteristics of the Student-teacher Relationship[1]

Percentage of Responses	%
Performance characteristics of teachers, e.g. rewards students, facilitates learning	29
Personal characteristics of teachers e.g. honest, fair	27
Mutual respect between teacher and student	22
Teacher respected as authority figure	14
Teacher seen as role model	5
Teacher seen as subject matter specialist	4
Total number of responses	83

Reflections on

---

1 What should contitute the student-teacher relationship?

Table 7

Personal Strengths and Weaknesses as Teacher

Percentage of Responses	Strengths1			Weaknesses2		
	Before	After	Sem	Before	After	Sem
Performance characteristics	8	56	58	18	80	55
Personal characteristics	68	31	10	50	18	5
Subject matter specialist	17	10	-	5	-	-
Background experience	8	-	-	27	-	-
Professional awareness	-	4	13	-	2	8
All seminar topics	-	-	3	-	-	-
No seminar topics	-	-	16	-	-	32
Total number of responses	105	52	31	22	40	38

Reflections on

---

1 Before: Tell your strengths as they relate to a career in teaching.

After: What strengths as a teacher have been improved and reinforced as a result of your student teaching experience?

Sem: What, if any, strengths as a teacher have been improved and reinforced as a result of seminar experiences?

2 Before: Tell your weaknesses as they relate to a career in teaching.

After: What weaknesses as a teacher have been revealed and improved upon as a result of student teaching?

Sem: What, if any, weaknesses as a teacher have been revealed and improved upon as a result of seminar experiences?